

19th
Cent
RC 439
N48
1841

FACTS

CONNECTED WITH THE TREATMENT OF

Insanity

IN ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL;

WITH

LETTERS ON THE SUBJECT

TO

LORD BROUGHAM,

THE COMMITTEE OF ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL,

DRS. BIRKBECK, ELLIOTSON,

AND OTHERS,

AND AN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO

THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUIS OF NORMANBY.

BY A LADY.

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"My wish more recently has been, and still is, that the public generally should become better acquainted with what is, and what is *not*, mental aberration or Insanity—that persons possessing talent, and who might dare to show a little more fire of intellect than their companions, should not be subjected to the irritating scrutiny of ignorant professors until they are really brought under the malady."—*Extract from a Letter to the Marquis of Normanby.*  
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LONDON:

EFFINGHAM WILSON,

18, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHIN.

MDCCLXXXIII.



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W. Davy, Printer, 8, Gilbert-street, Oxford-street.



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FACTS, &c.

To the Most Noble the Marquis of Normanby.

May 20th, 1841.

MY LORD,

Having been induced to present to the public, through the press, that which I flatter myself will be read by you with some degree of interest, I take the liberty, through the same medium, of referring to the prompt and satisfactory answer I received to a letter I forwarded to your Lordship on the 20th of March; in which you kindly encouraged me to communicate any information I may be able to give on the treatment of Insanity.

The facts I present to view expose a system which has been eating, like a canker as it were, at the roots of domestic peace and prosperity. My letters will prove that I have endeavoured by every possible means to draw private attention to the subject, more especially to the communications I could give; but as that has failed, I am impelled to take this step, which a

false delicacy in my advisers prevented my availing myself of earlier. If, my Lord, I relate that which may excite a just indignation towards those who have for so many years upheld a system under which my sufferings have been so severe, I trust it will be the means of bringing them sufficiently to their senses, to induce them wisely to resign their pretensions to a knowledge with regard to the aberration of mind and its remedy.—“Physician, heal thyself,” will most aptly apply to them.

I cannot help, my Lord, being conscious that I possess a mind, and one that must be free from the trammels which arbitrary custom imposes, and free also from the fetters that those who profess to cure insanity have hitherto had the power of rivetting. Feeling, as I do, happily emancipated from the mental thralldom in which I have been shackled, it would be the height of ingratitude were I not to confess the power that has released me from such bondage. I will, therefore, at the risk of being charged with delusion, religious mania, or any other term that may depreciate my assertions, state, that faith in Christ as the power of God, and a belief in the doctrines and promises of the gospel, with a practical attention to its ordinances and precepts, have been the efficient remedy for all my grievances; and pained have

I been when reflecting on the numbers now under the charge of insanity being prevented from applying to the same source of restoration, owing to their being placed by the power of the Lord Chancellor under compulsive restraint to authorized menials. To profit in the ordinances of religion, the individual should be free—free to hear, and free to choose whom they shall hear: they ought also to be permitted freely to express their thoughts and ideas, however erroneous they may be. Added to the above sentiments, I will take the liberty of observing, that I believe the anti-social and unchristian spirit that would curtail to its own narrow view the innocent amusements and luxuries the Almighty designed his creatures should enjoy, has been one great cause of insanity spreading to the alarming extent it has.

Should I, my Lord, in this my first publication, meet with encouragement to issue a second, I think I shall then be able to present to the public letters that will be read with still more interest than any I now offer for perusal.

I am, my Lord,

With great respect,

Yours most sincerely obliged,

SARAH NEWELL.

1, *Upper Grafton-street,*
Fitzroy-square.

From Garrett Dillon, Esq. M.D.

34, *Alfred-place*,
26th May, 1841.

DEAR MISS NEWELL,

I am glad that you are about publishing something upon the state and treatment of the insane in the public Lunatic Asylums. I never had an opportunity of forming an opinion from my own observations of the management of such institutions, but from all that I have of late learned, they are not so well conducted as some thought they were; and I understand that they are in the hands of jobbers, who turn them more to the purposes of patronage than to the alleviation of the malady for the treatment of which they were originally established.

It is gratifying, however, to reflect that a great improvement has been made in the laws respecting private mad-houses. Before 1827, the certificate of any one medical man, whether physician, surgeon, or apothecary, was sufficient to consign a person as insane to the tender mercies of the mad-house keepers; and it was then notorious that such certificates signed were always kept in readiness at the asylums to be filled up with the alleged lunatic's name, on application for admission. With such certifi-

cates, and strait-waistcoats and hand-cuffs, powerful and unfeeling fellows used to be despatched from the mad-houses to the dwelling of the patient, and if he resisted, they tied him neck and heels and carried him off; generally in the dead of night. In this way hundreds of persons perfectly sane were immured, and once in, it was next to impossible for them to get out, every one being apprehensive of the consequences of releasing them, and reluctant to credit their own representations if not confirmed by the keepers of the houses, whose interest it was to detain them.

Things are now very different. I was the first that grappled with the abuses and exposed the system. Through the influence of the late benevolent Lord Robert Seymour, I succeeded in getting a committee of the House of Commons in 1827, to enquire into the state and management of private mad-houses. Upon the report of that committee, laws were passed. I suggested such enactments as I thought most efficacious. It was then enacted that it should not be lawful to receive any patient into a private mad-house, without a certificate of insanity, signed by two regularly qualified medical men, who had visited the patients separately; and it was further enacted that in every house containing a certain number of patients,

there should be a medical man attached to visit the patients every day. For the further security of the insane, or rather, the sane confined in such houses, the Secretary of State was by the same law vested with the power of appointing a Board of Commissioners, one-third to be physicians, to visit lunatic asylums, and investigate all the evils and discharge all persons recovered. In this Board is vested the power of licensing lunatic asylums, and of depriving them of their licenses in cases of abuse. The Board visits very often—once a month at least.

Notwithstanding all this, I am told that even now there is but little done in private mad-houses for the cure of insanity, and that a victim however sane is often foiled in efforts to get released.

Mad-house keeping, you are perhaps aware, is a profitable business; very few, however, but the heartless who care nothing about the means, so long as the end—money-getting—is accomplished, embark in it: but the nature of the avocation makes it necessarily so; persons of fine feelings and humane hearts could not stand it, and carry it on to make it pay.

It is on this account that I have often wished to see the cure of the insane taken up by the government, and public asylums established under public authority, and above all under the

watchful eye of the press, for insane persons of every rank. There is one thing in relation to the insane peculiarly worthy of notice—the richer the patients are, and the more paid for their care, the less chance have they of recovering: of those pronounced lunatics after legal investigations, and placed under the care of the Court of Chancery, none, at least that I have heard of, ever recovered, and got into repossession of their property. The victims of this description and class are usually placed singly with medical men, and too often neglected. I have not time to write all I could, of my own knowledge, say about the jobbing in the insane, even in paupers, that prevails so much. The subject is, however, in better hands than mine, and it is fortunate that it has been taken up by one so competent to do it justice as you are.

I am,

Dear Miss Newell,

Very truly yours,

GARRETT DILLON.

To Miss Newell.

*Extracts from a Statement I drew up in 1821,
which I refer to in the Letter to the Com-
mittee of St. Luke's Hospital.*

“Most of the rooms, or rather cells, appropriated for the patients, have a hole near the top

in the shape of a half circle, called a window ; immediately under this, on the floor, is a crib filled with straw, on which is placed a flock bed. At the foot of this crib an iron ring is attached, with a chain to it, for the purpose of confining the patient's leg. Of a winter's morning the shutter has been let down, and the cold wind, rain, and snow, have fallen upon me, while I had scarcely sufficient covering to keep me warm. Wishing to be employed, I was allowed by the keeperess to assist her in her menial services, which I and others have done most cheerfully ; as also to wash and comb the patients. One young woman, who was almost constantly confined to her crib, with only straw to lie on and a bit of blanket to cover her, had her head so swarming with vermin, that it was eaten into holes by them : the corruption and filth that has been on the comb after I have combed her head, has caused me repeatedly to heave. For such services we have had broken victuals given to us, which were then and at all times very gratefully received by us. I as well as others have frequently been so much in want of food, that we have selected scraps to eat that have been sent for the cat from the keeperess's table. After being confined rather more than four months, I was discharged by the physician as cured ; but what I was cured of

I could not imagine, unless it was of purity of thought and desire. Owing to the great and prevailing objection that existed to making any reference to mental maladies, I never made the slightest allusion to where I had been or what I had suffered. The distress and horror I experienced through having so much pressing on my mind, is scarcely to be imagined; my reflections, consequently, by day, and my dreams by night, were painfully distressing, and at times almost intolerable. I nevertheless had my liberty, and appeared to possess the privileges of society. My friends believed I had received benefit in the Hospital, and when they thought I required the skillful (as they supposed) attention of the physicians, applied again for my admission, which was obtained; and although my bodily weakness was great I was taken in and treated like the rest of the patients. I wished for repose, and would retire to the room where I slept. Each gallery has two rooms, containing four beds; and the second time I was admitted, I slept for a few weeks in one of them. I knew I had no right in any other apartment, but thought I might go for quiet into my own; an old woman, however, who had been confined for nearly twenty years in the Institution, slept in the same room, and she has repeatedly turned me out and bolted the door, so that it could not be opened but with a

key that she or the keeperesses had in their possession.

“Dunston, the master, appeared to sympathize with me, and I thought I might look up to him as to a father, being a man upwards of sixty years of age. One morning about seven o'clock I was alone in the gallery, walking in a disconsolate mood, when he came up to me suddenly, caught hold of me, and pushed me into a small room, forcing me against the wall. I felt indignant at such treatment, and rushing from him I went into the dining-room, where I thought I might see some of my fellow-sufferers, but no one was there: he followed, and again took hold of me. Through my resisting his violence one of my knees was wrenched, which occasioned excruciating pain, and prevented him further annoying me: he appeared to feel for me, I therefore instantly forgave him. I did not mention the circumstance to any one, fearing, and not without reason, that if I did, I should be kept in the whole twelve months, and then be sent out an incurable lunatic. One morning a woman of very interesting appearance was sitting by my side confined in a strait-waistcoat, which was tied very tight; she complained of it hurting her, and asked me to untie it. I had suffered so much from strait-waistcoats, that I felt as though I had one on myself.

I thought no harm could result from merely loosening the knot, and was in the act of so doing when the keeperess entered, and without asking a single question, caught hold of me, beat me with her double fist, and drove me before her into a room where the raving maniacs were chained : and for thus sympathising with a sister in affliction, I was confined amongst the worst of the patients the whole day, with a chain rattling to my leg. After being in the Hospital about five months, I was again set at liberty, but never alluded to a single circumstance that had ever taken place there : I felt happy in having my liberty, and was willing to forgive and forget. If by accident I met the doctor or any one else I had seen in that vile place, I felt ill for the remainder of the day.

“Circumstances once more occurred which caused my friends to suppose I again required the aid of a physician ; and at the latter end of 1817, my father applied for my third admission to the Hospital, and obtained it ; not presuming for a moment, that any medical man, or others holding important situations in that institution, could act so basely as their consciences must oft-times accuse them of having acted. Before I was taken into the committee-room, I begged and prayed most imploringly of my friends not to allow me to be again confined there, but all in vain,

and it was too late then to reveal the secrets that pressed on my mind. I was led before the committee, and my name was asked in a stern and preremptory manner, as though I had been guilty of some base crime. While I was being torn from my father and brother, I called out to them and made some little resistance, which caused the keeperesses, with the aid of the doctor, to drag me into the gallery; I was then pushed by two of them into one of the cells; a strait-waistcoat was forced upon me by two of the female attendants, who showed a most violent and outrageous spirit, calling me a devil, and wounding my mind by their observations, referring at the same time to my former mild behaviour. They then threw me into the crib, left the cell and bolted the door, leaving me to ruminate on my dreadful situation. In the course of half an hour I was taken by the doctor before the physician, who merely bid me put out my tongue, and after asking my name, I was again put under the charge of the keeperess. Instead of doing needle work at home for my beloved father and three affectionate brothers, I had, on the evening of the day I was admitted, some cravats of Dunston's put into my hands to hem, which I did, but with feelings and reflections not easily to be imagined. I have oft-times been distressed to

hear the patients ask for food and work, while neither could be obtained for them. During the last three months of my twelvemonth's incarceration in the Hospital, I was confined to my bed every night with a chain rattling to my leg, and also every Sabbath: so that from Saturday night to Monday morning I was a prisoner in my cell, with my leg confined to an iron ring and chain. I, with several other women, have been pulled out of our beds earlier than usual to walk down three or four flights of stone stairs, without shoes or stockings on, or any garment whatever, with only a small blanket round each of us, to be thrown into the bath, and if any woman had previously offended the keeperesses, they would punish her by holding her head under the water. The keeperess, in a consequential and preremptory manner, has ordered me to get a pail of water and clean my room out; when I have done that, and in such a manner that no fault could justly be found, she has abused me for not doing it in the way she thought was right, expressing at the same time her astonishment of the little use ladies were of."

S. N.

Copy of Anonymous Letter to Dr. Birkbeck.

September, 1825.

SIR,

While hearing read a prospectus of a work, edited by a gentleman of so much talent and respectability as yourself, I thought I should like to give you intelligence which in all probability you are unacquainted with—which is, that persons of talent and intellect are actually murdered by a set of ignorant beings, who have no other talent than for eating, drinking, and indulging their sensual appetites. I had a beloved relative, who was making rapid progress in the divine art of painting—and he was murdered in St. Luke's Hospital. Yes,—he was murdered! Ought the murderers of such a youth as he was, to be sanctioned in this enlightened age to continue their murderous practices? It may be asked, How can it be proved he was murdered? Let gentlemen of your profession make strict inquiries respecting the treatment persons receive there, and in all probability they will come to the same conclusion.

St. Luke's Hospital is called a charity—a charity forsooth! I am acquainted with a lady who was confined in that place for months in her senses: she had made some proficiency in

a genteel profession, and would have been able to have supported herself in a respectable manner, if she had had her liberty ; but there she was obliged to eat food only fit for pigs to eat, dress as though she were supported by charity, and has actually been obliged to collect the sand from off the floor to wash the dirt from her face, because sufficient soap was not allowed. That place is said to be supported by voluntary contributions—one would suppose, that those who voluntarily contribute their money towards its support, are persons who have the whole and sole management of it, and are afraid that their vile practices should be exposed, and therefore cheerfully contribute—if it be possible for them to feel cheerful. I will venture to say, the joy or pleasure they may feel is “like the crackling of thorns under a pot,”—they really are to be pitied ; but those who are confined in chains and strait-waistcoats, are persons who demand greater pity, and who ought to have justice done them.

Englishmen, know your own privileges, endeavour to find the sources of misery, and do all in your power to stem the torrent.

Time and circumstances may develope my motive for writing anonymously, and if no good should result, I hope no harm will.

To Garrett Dillon, Esq. (now Dr. Dillon.)

August 28th, 1827.

SIR,

A letter written by you to the Magistrates of Middlesex reflects high honour on your character, and I believe every thing you have asserted to be perfectly correct respecting private mad-houses ; but when you alluded to St. Luke's Hospital, I felt persuaded you were not thoroughly acquainted with the management of that Institution, and the inhumanity which is exercised under its roof, or you would not say "Every Englishman has a right to be proud of such a place." If the circumstances with which I am acquainted, and the sufferings I have personally experienced there, were to be exposed to public view, many who now think very highly of St. Luke's Hospital would shudder at the exposure.

It is very easy for those who are interested in the government of that place, to impress on the minds of persons the impropriety of relying on the evidence of one who has been a patient there, and self-interest prompts them to foster that impression ; but I presume, none can speak so correctly respecting the internal government of such a house as those who, with their reasoning faculties in exercise, have been

there confined in chains amongst maniacs, and have experienced all the horrors arising from such a situation.

I shall be happy to give any information in my power that may be required, as I consider it the duty of every individual to sacrifice personal feelings for general good. It must be the desire of every humane person that the greater sufferers should be the first relieved, and those I conclude are the Pauper Lunatics ; yet while the attention of benevolent individuals is directed to paupers, and to houses for their reception, may they not forget St. Luke's Hospital.

I am, Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

SARAH NEWELL.

32, *Whitecross-street,*
Cripplegate.

From Dr. Dillon in reply.

Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy Square.
28th August, 1827.

MADAM,

I HAVE just received your letter, for which I beg to offer you my sincere thanks. You are right ; I was not so well acquainted with the manner in which St. Luke's Hospital is managed when I wrote my letter to the

Magistrates of Middlesex, as circumstances have made me since, and I have been horrified in hearing that it is but little better than those dreadful dens, the private mad houses, whose influence, I fear, extend into it. Your letter is most creditable to yourself, and by your allowing me to publish it, you would perhaps be doing a service to hundreds that may have the misfortune of a visitation the most awful that man can fear, and which none of us can say we are secure from.

I will call on you to-morrow, between one and two o'clock, when I hope to have the pleasure of hearing something more from you on this very important subject.

I am, Madam,

Yours, &c.

GARRETT DILLON.

[My father objected to the publication of this letter, therefore it has not before met the public eye.—S. N.]

*To the Committee and Governors of St. Luke's
Hospital.*

City, July 13, 1832.

GENTLEMEN,

On the 21st of May, I wrote a letter to the Committee of this Hospital, stating I would

take the liberty of calling some committee day, for the purpose of suggesting alterations and improvements for the benefit of the patients, unless I had intimation by letter from the Committee of the impropriety of that plan. Last Friday I called at the Hospital to put my purpose into practice ; after waiting without effect near an hour and a half, I left with the intention of writing another letter.

If the gentlemen connected with St. Luke's Hospital were anxious for its real prosperity, I presume they would endeavour to obtain information to enable them to adopt plans accordingly ; but there is very good reason to suppose the Physician and others holding appointments in the Institution, are more desirous to retain their lucrative situations, than to make any exertions for the benefit of their suffering fellow-creatures. While I write, and whenever I reflect on such characters, I really feel pity and compassion for them, well knowing how perfectly consistent it is for depraved human beings to grasp at anything that will advance their own interest. Though benevolence is an excellent quality, justice should act in harmony with it ; therefore, I will not withhold giving my opinion of the incapacity, consequently criminality of those holding important situations in the Hospital.

No truly conscientious man with his moral feelings in proper activity, would or could consent to retain a responsible situation in St. Luke's Hospital, while a set of ignorant unfeeling creatures, the keepers and keeperesses, rendered callous to humane feelings through their practices towards the patients, are allowed to exercise more authority than the physician, doctor, or any one else. I am persuaded the conscience of the physician must often accuse him of having criminally erred in many cases—and undoubtedly in mine. My having been confined so much with the insane while in possession of reason and correct feelings, I made very useful observations, and was not long before I came to the conclusion that more kindness, prudent management, and intellectual skill were required, than the mental restraints and corporeal punishments I have witnessed in the hospital. But what was to be expected from an ignorant woman who could neither read nor write? I have reason to suspect the present superintendents are of the same class; they, perhaps, may be able to read and use their pen, but make no more use of a book or pen than if they were as incapable as B—B—the keeperess—my mistress, as she was pleased to call herself.

Being very justly denominated “quiet and

harmless," the first and second time of my imprisonment under the roof of the Hospital, I was allowed to assist Betty to wash, comb, and feed the patients, brush her stove, clean her fire irons, scrub the floor of her room, clean windows, &c. Many superior women in the Hospital, for the sake of passing away time, have submitted to do what I did—truly such occupations are very fit for a lady! How would Dr. — feel, were his wife, daughter, or sister, subjected to such menial services? And to be cured—of what? In my case it was of that proper sensibility of feeling which gentlemen profess to admire so much in the female sex. While reflections of a melancholy description very naturally arise in consequence of such abuses existing, it is, at the same time, truly laughable to observe the labyrinths into which the conceited and the *wise* are frequently hurried by their own folly. I was also allowed to accompany Betty with the tray to the bread room, and was permitted to follow her into the kitchen, and other rooms adjacent where her fellow servants, the keepers and keeperesses would sometimes be assembled. Though I scarcely ever expressed a word, nothing escaped my notice; and exceedingly disgusted have I been with their behaviour and trifling conversation frequently bordering on indecency and lewdness.

I contrasted their unfeeling dispositions and conduct with the sufferings of the patients—parents torn from their children, children from their parents, lovers and friends from each other, and all the social feelings so valuable in domestic life, literally massacred by the unfortunate possessors being allowed to moan for society in lonesome cells, or confined in chains and strait-waistcoats amongst raving maniacs. Can I forget, among numberless other inconsistencies, the circumstance of my being chained, with an iron ring to my leg, in a small room where the worst of the patients were confined, for only exercising sympathy to one of my fellow sufferers? No! what has been learnt from melancholy and painful experience, is not very easily forgotten. When I was discharged from the Hospital as cured, I might have made complaints before the Committee; but I was too prudent to choose that opportunity; I then thought, when I am completely out of the power of those interested in the management of this place, a more suitable time may be chosen—that time has now arrived, and I certainly will not let the subject rest. Do you suppose I can reflect without regret on the great loss of time connected with my profession, and the demoralizing influence I was under at the most interesting period of my life, whilst an inmate in the

Hospital? Instead of my mental energies being directed aright, they were crushed, and my animal spirits broken.

Through the baneful discipline my mind had been subjected to, and the degradation to which I had been under the necessity of submitting, I felt, when in society, the depreciated state of my moral feelings; consequently any intellectual proficiency I had previously acquired was considered by me of no value; and, also, when I reflected on the managers of a public Institution "supported by voluntary contributions," being sanctioned to commit the same depredations on the intellects of others, as they had on mine, I could not appreciate mental acquirements in any one. I am confident that many thousands of individuals, both men and women, were they permitted to exercise their faculties as rational and human beings, (as they certainly will at no very distant time,) and be allowed to express their thoughts on the subject, they would assert they had personally experienced what I have stated. What are the natural or rather unnatural consequences of such demoralization? Out of charity, I must conclude no one connected with the management of St. Luke's Hospital can adequately comprehend, and with propriety answer that question, or such a state of things would surely not be allowed to exist. The

intense reflection and re-reflection which has been the result of my experience has not been of trifling avail; therefore, with me, the question is solved without difficulty. Some years since, very dismal reflections would often obtrude for the welfare of the rising generation, who, when they arrive to the years of maturity, and dared to show an independent spirit, would be liable to be condemned by mad doctors, and confined for life in a madhouse; but I am now happy, in the confidence that the light that is beginning to shine on the human mind will bring to public view the deceit and craft of a certain class of professional men, who have often, and would not scruple at any time, to set God, religion, and nature, at defiance. The sensitiveness to which I have before alluded being perfectly natural to me, has arisen superior to all that has opposed it, never to be again annihilated by oppression either by man or woman.

What I rejoice at for the sake of others is, that I possess written statements relating to my admission to the Hospital, and what I EXPERIENCED while an inmate there. These statements were made in 1821; had I deferred performing that duty till this time, several incidents might have escaped my memory. Nor can I forget my sensations and ideas while looking through the iron bars of my prison,

as though I were a felon awaiting my sentence of condemnation.—Why was I thus situated? —Can Dr. —— answer that question? I am sure he cannot satisfactorily.

When I requested by note on the 15th of last March an interview with Dr. Sutherland, and obtained my request, it was for the purpose of proving to him that I was of sound mind, which he cannot disprove. He must know there are fatal abuses existing in the Hospital. Thank God, *I am truly thankful* that abuses of all descriptions, and in every department, will be investigated, and offenders compelled to relinquish their evil practices. Then those in poverty and distress, who have patiently suffered through the oppression of the wealthy, who indulge in ease and luxury, and revel in that which degrades the human intellects, will shine the brightest ornaments of society, enjoying that peace which the world cannot give or take away. Had I not found support and consolation in religion, I should probably now be suffering like many others, whose mental darkness and misery is deplorable. Instead of which I enjoy true peace and tranquillity of mind, such as most Christians not only comprehend, but value above the riches of India.

I will just observe, that those who reject Jesus Christ and his word, the Scriptures, forsake the fountain of living waters for “broken

cisterns that can hold no water." I am aware this sort of language will be considered wild and enthusiastic, and no doubt by some be considered an evidence of insanity; but I know the foundation on which I stand, 'tis a rock that cannot be moved. As I most earnestly desire the happiness of every human being, I entreat all I address to study the Scriptures, paying particular attention to Christ's sermon on the Mount.

If the contents of this epistle should cause any one to reflect *seriously* on his duty to his fellow creatures, and to the Almighty, my motive for writing this will prove effectual, and I shall be gratified. The following appropriate lines from Isaiah, 55th chapter, 7th verse, will form a suitable conclusion, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

If conscience and reason would allow, I would subscribe myself "your's very respectfully;" but though I cannot finish this letter as I usually do others,

Believe me, gentlemen,

Your sincere friend,

SARAH NEWELL.

To the Governors and Committee
of St. Luke's Hospital.

To the Editor of the Times.

City, August 25th, 1832.

SIR,

Though you have declined entering further on the subject of insanity, I, however, venture to trouble you *once* more, begging you will devote a short time to reflect on the additional facts and observations I unhesitatingly offer to your notice, humbly requesting your attention to the whole of this letter.

In my last to you, Sir, in July, I asserted that the authorities of St. Luke's Hospital dared not encounter a weak woman, because she had "truth and reason to uphold her, and humanity for her guide." It appears I was correct by my not receiving an answer to a request I made to them by letter on the 3rd of this month; I say,—“Gentlemen,—In consequence of your assertions made to the public through the medium of the *Times* paper of the 19th of last month, I request you will appoint a day for me to appear before you, for the purpose of proving that there is ample reason for complaint.” At the conclusion I again beg they will afford me an opportunity of appearing in their presence. Though I fully expected some notice would have been taken of the letter; I am not surprised

that none has been ; it is only in harmony with their general proceedings.

Those who are, or have been, confined in St. Luke's Lunatic Hospital, or English Inquisition, are not permitted to communicate their ideas as others do, they are scarcely allowed to possess the attributes of a human being. I can never forget the impression made on my memory while in my teens, soon after my first admission to that place, nineteen years since. It was said the Committee was going to walk through the galleries ; four or five, I scarcely know how to say *gentlemen*, entered the room where I and other patients were sitting. The first that entered said laughingly, " Here's a show." Another with as much indifference replied, " A show of cattle." I looked towards them with silent contempt, and such reflections passed in my mind as were natural on hearing those remarks. One of the party evidently appeared, from his countenance, to feel for us, and if still alive, may possibly recollect the circumstance. Is it reasonable to suppose there can be any material alterations for the better, in the moral treatment of the patients, since that time, while the same individuals have continued in office ; and a similar description of men, it is natural to conclude, from circumstances, form the committee ?

Let me ask whoever I may, whether private gentlemen or professional, if they know anything about St. Luke's Hospital, the answer is invariably in the negative. Why, Mr. Editor, should the public be kept in the dark respecting that place any more than other public Institutions? The malady is made ten times more formidable and distressing through the secrecy interested men attach to it. Those men must know, if they are at all acquainted with the subject they profess, that there is nearly as much insanity exhibited in society out of a mad house as within one; yet it is not considered necessary for every house to be furnished with chains, leg-locks, hand-cuffs, strait waistcoats, &c., to be made use of when any one exhibits, in their behaviour, proofs of that malady, which is more often the case than those can imagine who have not studied the effects of insanity. The would-be-thought wise, and the crafty, generally connect mystery with all their proceedings; therefore, the above named articles are requisite for their purposes, and the poor ignorant keepers, being allowed the free use of them, confine the patient just when they please, whether confinement be required or not. Is it consistent with rationality, that an individual, either man or woman, possessing only acquirements and knowledge obtained through very in-

ferior faculties, should have the whole and sole management of thirty or forty of their fellow creatures, whose misfortunes are frequently owing to their moral and mental superiority not being appreciated or understood? Nevertheless, those ignorant narrow minded beings, are allowed to exercise uncontrolled authority over such persons, and being themselves total strangers to any excitement of generous feeling, know not how to value qualities of that description in others. Instead of patients being encouraged and rewarded for what may be excellent, they are more frequently confined in chains and strait waistcoats, and prevented performing that which would be worthy of imitation. Charity would suggest that it must be insanity in any one or more, to permit such an injurious state of things to exist. I wish not to encourage the idea, that men are such devils incarnate as to sanction a system so objectionable, with a full knowledge of the consequences. The first and great principle the Almighty inculcates is Love; yet, in a country where christianity, founded by the author of love, is generally professed, a public Institution is supported where that noble attribute is crushed, and that which elevates the human character, reason, is shackled and tarnished, being rendered unfit for general use, while fraud, hatred,

and revenge, have ample scope for action, and constant friction leaves no chance of those infernal qualities becoming dull ; but being a charity, we must be very *grateful and very humble* to those who support it. About two years since, I heard a Bishop of the Established Church publicly eulogize the Institution : really the ignorance that prevails is most distressing. Thank God for the reason he has bestowed on me, and for affording me the capability of exercising my moral feelings ; my gratitude to him is constantly active, and prompts me to practice this divine command,—“ Love thy neighbour as thyself.” After what I have experienced, were I not to make use of all the means in my power to convince rational persons who unfortunately have not had their minds directed to the subject, that men and women confined in mad houses can feel, and that most acutely, I should give a proof that my own mind was not sound, nor my feelings in proper exercise.

In chains I oft have been confin'd,
 I've fourteen years been free ;
 Liberty, truth, and peace combin'd,
 Has caused me health and glee.

I'll not indulge a selfish will,
 But sooth another's woe ;
 Happiness, love, yea, good for ill,
 With pleasure I'll bestow.

I presume, every one possessing an adequate portion of reason, will agree that insane patients, liable to excitement as they generally are, should have those to superintend them who are judicious and wise enough to make allowances, having sufficient command over their own temper to govern it discreetly. In every day transactions of social life, how very observable it is, that resistance excites in others the same disposition ; therefore a keeper should not manifest evident proofs of madness, which they profess to understand, by storming, furiously vociferating, and beating, with their double fist, those who are placed under their power, which has been repeatedly done, without the slightest provocation ;—treatment like that cannot be forgotten, and, in the hope of ameliorating the miseries of others, ought not to be. I have frequently witnessed quarrels between the keeper and the patient ; the former has been the aggressor, but there was no redress whatever for the latter ; if they made a complaint to the physician or doctor, no attention whatever was paid to them. I was too reasonable and discreet, to commence or carry on a dispute with the keeper, therefore I was called “ quiet and harmless.” The only time I manifested *any kind* of violence, while an inmate in the Hospital, was when I took up a bunch of keys,

that was lying at my feet, one of which was to lock me by the leg, and immediately dashed them on the floor, saying with much emphasis, in the presence of two old women, superintendents in the absence of the keeperess,—“D—— the keys.” They were surprised I could show so much spirit and temper. I always had, and still have, an innate antipathy to every kind of arbitrary restraint, which causes me to feel for others.

Sweet Liberty !

Secure on British shores, a privilege *divine*,
 Fiends cannot thee uproot, nor will thy grace decline ;
 For God thy glory will defend,
 And o’er the earth thine impulse send.

I feel persuaded, if such a reformation, as I am most anxious should take place in St. Luke’s Hospital, were accomplished, and the patients treated *skilfully* and *humanely*, there would be scarcely any use for private mad houses.

While surgeons and other scientific men have been most importunate to obtain means for correct information on the anatomy of the body, they have appeared not to estimate the *mind* sufficiently to devote a portion of their time to investigate or ascertain the springs of action connected with this important animating and never-dying principal.

I find it quite essential to exercise patience

and forbearance in consequence of the universal prejudice attached to insanity. That subject being so much enveloped in mystery, darkens the understandings of intellectual agents, closes the avenue of their sympathies, and excites unjust suspicion. But Truth and Reason will ultimately conquer, and reign triumphantly; then the few secrets divulged relative to St. Luke's Hospital will be appreciated, mental aberration understood, and youth, beauty, and health, in company with talent, will *then* not be sacrificed at the shrine of Ignorance, but be directed by skilful guides to that path that leads to virtue and honour.

Requesting pardon for again troubling you,
I remain, Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

SARAH NEWELL.

32, *Whitecross Street,*
Cripplegate.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I have read Colonel L. Stanhope's "Series of Letters, &c. on the Greek Revolution." I was exceedingly pleased with the following motto prefixed to a Journal in Athens, "Publicity is the Soul of Justice." It is peculiarly suited to my views, and may with propriety be here adopted. I presume wherever the omnipotence of Truth is not alarming, that motto will be approved of.

S. N.

*To the Society "For the Prevention of Cruelty
to Animals."*

July 6th, 1833.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Meeting on Thursday week, "For the prevention of cruelty to animals," was peculiarly interesting to me; every one who attended that meeting must have been highly gratified. The society has evidently and meritoriously obtained a permanent footing, and will continue and prosper, until the cause for its existence shall very much diminish, if not entirely cease.

Should your funds be greatly increased, which is probable, and consequently your sphere of benevolence capable of being extended, allow me to suggest that you will bestow a little of your time and attention towards a class of animals called the insane, who have been considered on a level with brutes, and wantonly treated as such, their restoration having been thus materially impeded, with as little compunction on the part of their oppressors, as was exercised towards the brute animals before your admirable society existed. One of the speakers (Mr. Smith) intimated that, "human beings might expose any severity they had unjustly

received.” That will apply to all the subjects of this highly privileged country, excepting those who have experienced a temporary aberration of their mental powers ; should they, while in that state be subjected to cruelty and the most aggravated tyranny, they must ever after remain silent ; or, if they allude to the subject, be viewed with suspicion, and treated with distrust, which has caused too many to withhold light and put it “under a bushel.”

A few months since, a worthy man came under my notice, who taught himself to write at the age of fifty-three, on purpose to record, for the most praiseworthy motives, his former treatment, and that of his fellow sufferers in a mad house. Great praise is due to this man’s zeal ; there being every reason to believe, that an important investigation was instituted in 1827, and the most appalling facts brought to light, through the information he verbally gave to Lord Robert Seymour, of the base atrocities he had witnessed in a lunatic asylum. Such receptacles have been, and probably are, as prejudicial in their effects, as any “Dog-pit” brought under the notice of your society.

Much, very much, has been effected for the benefit of the insane, and in their behalf some good laws established ; though it avails but little, to pass laws for the protection of either

the human or the brute species, unless those laws are respectfully observed, and, if needful, enforced. While depraved human nature exists, and ignorant persons like the keepers of the insane are invested with unlimited authority, there will need constant watchfulness and repeated checks, to keep them within due bounds. The account which I received from a convalescent patient, whom I lately visited in a private asylum for the insane, confirms these opinions.

If, gentlemen, the subject to which this letter refers be deemed by you worthy of consideration, and at your next public meeting you should intimate that it is your intention, should your funds allow, to extend your exertions to all descriptions of animals that cannot appeal to law for justice or protection, I will then become a subscriber—many no doubt would cheerfully subscribe with that prospect in view. The society's usefulness would thus be materially augmented, and your benevolence would comprise all who justly claim your sympathy. It would then be practically shewn that exercising christian feeling towards the helpless animal of the lower creation, “engenders and cultivates the same *principle* of action towards our fellow creatures in a proportionably higher degree.”

Leaving the above observations and suggestions to your consideration, I remain, Gentlemen, with much esteem for your excellent intentions towards the *inferior*, though in some respects, *superior* animals.

Yours respectfully,

SARAH.

To the Right Hon. Lord Brougham.

May 24th, 1838.

MY LORD,

The public interest which is now manifested for the natives of our West India Colonies, induces me to compare their state of slavery with mental slavery at home; both positions tending to debase the human being below the brute. Such reflections, with a well attested information of your Lordship's active and benevolent character, stimulate me to address this letter to you on behalf of the latter class, hoping your Lordship may suggest some means to alleviate their miseries, and break asunder those bonds which cramp the intellects of thousands of our brethren in this highly favoured country. I allude to that mental degradation which so many are writhing under through having been consigned by their well meaning

friends to the care of mercenary doctors, who profess to understand how to cure Insanity. The most flagitious crimes have been committed by professional men in signing certificates of that malady, their victims have thereby been most unjustly immured in lunatic asylums, and left unheeded to pray on their wrongs with their sympathies outraged and their intellects fettered, by which they are rendered unfit to associate with those who enjoy their liberty. If by the overruling hand of Providence they are set free, they must never allude to the treatment they received in those receptacles of horror, or they would be suspected of still being of unsound mind. When a criminal sheds blood and death ensues, he is sought for with the greatest assiduity, and if found is punished accordingly. If there be no law to punish those who cause more misery in society than the murdered, there should be some law or justice to prohibit such atrocities, instead of the sanction to perpetrate them which is now afforded. I am acquainted with facts, which if publicly known would disgrace the professional character of men who stand in high estimation for their skill.

I would, my Lord, with the greatest deference propose that a certain number of gentlemen possessing minds indisputably sound,

whose hearts and sympathies are not rendered callous nor their judgments warped by constantly coming in contact with insane persons, should form a committee to protect their fellow creatures from enormities so mentally debasing. The reason why abuses have existed so long in this department of practice is owing to the secrecy and mystery in which insanity is involved. Medical men who are applied to in cases of aberration of mind, find it quite consistent with their interest to continue to mystify the subject. I would therefore add to the above proposition, that public meetings should be convened to diffuse a light over the community in reference to this neglected subject, insanity, that those who through mental bondage can neither act for themselves nor their fellow sufferers, may have some prospect that justice will reach their case; "Publicity is the soul of justice."

The above observations result from twenty years study of the subject, and although the class to which they refer has been greatly benefitted of late years, much greater vigilance to the subject is required, which I pray your Lordship will endeavour to promote. Believing it incumbent on every individual to use all legitimate means in their power to forward the cause of humanity, I have therefore presumed

to address your Lordship, requesting pardon for any omission of respect due to one so deservedly exalted as yourself.

I am, my Lord,

Yours most respectfully,

SARAH NEWELL.

1, *Upper Grafton Street,*
Fitzroy Square.

Letter to Dr. Elliotson.

January 24th, 1840.

SIR,

When you called upon me about a month since, I told you of my having made an engagement with a friend to cease from writing letters, or making calls for a stated period. The stipulated time expired this day week, and I again feel myself at liberty to use my pen and express my thoughts as freely as I did previous to my consenting to such a request. I am fully aware the Almighty has endowed me with various talents, and I feel it my duty to exercise them; and as I now have no one connected with me, either by moral or social ties, who has a right to control me, I am determined to use the most strenuous efforts in my power for the emancipation of thousands, yea, tens of

thousands, of both men and women, who also possess talents, but like myself have been kept under mental bondage. Had I never been a patient in a lunatic asylum, but had possessed the advantages of many, who in consequence of not having such a condemnation attached to them, have felt unshackled and happy in the society of their friends, I also should have felt happy, and my professed friends would not have presumed to have offered the indignities which they have repeatedly done, and which I have been compelled patiently to bear. Being fully conscious of the favours the Almighty had conferred on me, I continued to trust in Him—believing he would in his own time make that clear, which to me appeared inexplicable. That time has arrived, and I say here as I have elsewhere, *I am happy*, but I cannot, I will not be happy alone. In every man I see a brother; I once had three beloved brothers, and loved one so much that I prophanely adored the ground he walked upon; he loved me too, our views and pursuits being the same, he being an artist; we seemed to possess but one soul. Who can judge the state of my mind whilst an inmate in St. Luke's Hospital, with my feelings as sensitive as at this moment, and possessing the same powers of reasoning, when I beheld this brother among

the men patients on the other side of the building!! with a full conviction too, that he like myself had fallen a victim to the execrable state of society, and the ignorance of professional men.* At one time I felt disposed to seek revenge for his death, but I have since been taught better, and as Christ prayed for his persecutors, so I pray, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I hope you will excuse me for troubling you with my views and purposes, but feeling certain that great mental, moral, and social conflicts and changes are approaching, and that I shall have to act a conspicuous part in putting my plans into practice, I am anxious to secure the good opinion of influential persons, for as society is constituted it would be an evidence of insanity for any one to suppose they can act singly to any good effect in a cause which affects the public at large.

About three years since I unexpectedly found amongst my papers the copy of a letter I wrote to Dr. Spurzheim while he was in America in 1832. I believe he died before it reached him. I had forgotten having written it, but in reading it over I am gratified to find the sentiments it contains accord with my present views in every respect, which proves that I am not actuated

* My brother, under the age of twenty-one, expired in St. Luke's Hospital at the latter end of 1818, after being confined there ten months.

by a zeal that will quickly evaporate. No, I trust it will increase until I see my desire accomplished.

I am, Sir,

Yours respectfully,

1, *Upper Grafton Street,*
Fitzroy Square.

SARAH NEWELL.

To Dr. Birkbeck.

November 4th, 1840.

Dear Sir,

May I trouble you to read the inclosed, and return it to me with your thoughts on the propriety or impropriety of having it inserted in some Periodical.

I have not been, nor am I anxious for publicity, for the sake of becoming a public character, but if that good I am desirous should be achieved, cannot be obtained unless I am brought out of obscurity, I shall be quite willing to appear. The minutest action of my life may be thoroughly investigated, and I shall stand as high, if not higher, in the good opinion of my friends.

May I take the liberty of requesting you will draw your pencil over any part you may disapprove of.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

SARAH NEWELL.

1, *Upper Grafton Street,*
Fitzroy Square.

38, *Finsbury Square*,
5th November, 1840.

Dear Madam,

I do not know to what purpose you intend to apply the manuscript, which, after a careful perusal, I now return ; that it may with propriety be published, I cannot doubt ; and, in so far as it may draw the attention of the humane portion of the public to the important subject to which it refers, its publication must do good. They who know you, will not hesitate to believe your assertions ; and they who do not, may be induced to enquire as to the certainty of your having endured the sufferings and privations of which you complain. It is at all times most useful to direct the eyes of the humane and intelligent towards the management of establishments so liable to abuse as the asylums, whether public or private, for the reception of the unfortunate individuals having an insane state of mind.

With best regards,

I remain, dear Madam,

Very truly yours,

GEORGE BIRKBECK.

TO MISS NEWELL.

November 4th, 1840.

During the last twenty years, I have endeavoured by all the means in my power, to draw the attention of the public to the injustice that I, as well as many others, have been, and are now, labouring under, from having the stigma of insanity attached to us, because, having been once inmates in a lunatic Asylum, we dare to mention the woful fact. Only those who have been under this ban, can adequately comprehend the effects that such a galling yoke has upon the mind. No allusion to the base tyranny we have been subjected to must be made, or a prejudiced suspicion immediately arises.

A sense of the great loss of time, with regard to my profession as an artist, and the injurious effects which have, humanly speaking, influenced the events of my life; through the blindness and wilful ignorance which have existed, and do still exist, in reference to insanity, induce me to present my individual case to the kind attention of the intellectual and the humane, but more particularly the christian public, with the view that some effort may be made to dissipate the darkness and ignorance that prevails so generally on the subject. By a steady perseverance in the duties which have devolved upon me, both of a public, so far as my

profession is concerned, and also of a private nature, those obstacles which at first appeared most formidable are completely overcome, and I now feel myself on ground sufficiently good, to appeal to my friends for that sympathy which I may, with propriety, expect from them. Is it consistent with the principles of any one professing moral feelings and sound reason to withhold their patronage from me, because I have been circumstanced as I have? Yet such I am told is really the fact, because I persist in my determination to expose the abuses I am acquainted with. If the causes of my former sufferings were properly investigated, as I hesitate not to say they *ought* to be, especially by physicians, and those who profess to understand the intricacies of mental operations; the errors of that system, which has been the means, in numberless instances, of uprooting the peace and order of social life, would be clearly seen.

At about the age of seventeen, I commenced painting miniature likenesses amongst my friends and acquaintances; having taken my own likeness without any instruction. My friends believing that I had a taste for the art, allowed me to have some lessons in miniature painting, with a view to making that department of art my profession. I afterwards made

great progress, and took much delight in my pencil ; but the limited means of my dear father, who, nevertheless, was in a respectable line of business, was a great barrier to my advancement. About this time, I became acquainted with a family whose mental acquirements attracted my attention, and greatly excited my intellects. Having made some proficiency in music, I felt sure that I could, with a little exertion, support myself without the aid of my parents ; I therefore showed a more independent spirit than I had ever before evinced ; and conscious of possessing natural talents which had hitherto been unobserved, but called into exercise by the stimulus of my new acquaintances, I manifested an air of independence, which could not be comprehended by those who had heretofore considered me a simple common-place girl.

My unobtrusiveness and timidity from childhood had been remarkable ; therefore to speak and act as though I could do both without depending upon another, appeared like insanity. My friends were advised to apply to a medical man, which they did ; and, although he was a physician of some eminence, the treatment he recommended, ultimately drove me raving mad, and for six weeks my beloved relatives were plunged into the greatest distress

on my account, their affection for me not allowing them to send me from home. In the course of two or three months, I was allowed to resume my usual avocations, and to revisit my friends ; but, before a year expired, my dear parents again thought it requisite to apply once more to a professional man. Having experienced so much inconvenience from my former excitement, they were advised to send me to St. Luke's Hospital ; but, until the admission ticket could be obtained, I was taken to a private asylum, where I received treatment the most barbarous, and was compelled to witness scenes truly heartrending and appalling, which left an indelible impression upon my mind. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, I was twice confined in a private lunatic Asylum, and three times in St. Luke's Hospital ; the first time, between four and five months ; the second time, about five months ; and the last time, the whole year ; and then sent out, pronounced to be "an uncured lunatic." I can prove that I was taken in with my reason and moral feelings perfectly sound ; and, after being subjected to strait-waistcoats, chains, leg-locks, &c., was discharged unfit to associate with rational persons. At the latter end of 1818, whilst an inmate in a private asylum for the insane, I formed the plan of keeping a copy of every let-

ter I wrote, feeling confident that they would, at a future time, prove interesting documents ; and, until within the last few months, this practice has been continued by me, as well as keeping a daily journal ; the latter has been the means of enabling me to correct those errors of judgment, into which all persons are liable to fall. Since the commencement of 1819, I have not been confined in a lunatic establishment ; but, retaining an acute sense of what I have endured, and a perfect recollection of the scenes I have witnessed in such places, my mental sufferings, arising from a knowledge that others were suffering from the same course of treatment, have at times been intense. God alone can tell what my mind endured after the summer of 1824, for more than two years, owing to that sympathy which I needed, being, through prejudice and ignorance, withheld from me ; I then, as on former occasions, fell a victim to those sensitive and benevolent feelings which I was conscious I possessed, and which, I am happy to say, influence my present conduct.

Straitened circumstances which I have been compelled to submit to, have, no doubt, been advantageous to my welfare, inasmuch as they have induced me to exercise those talents with which the Almighty endowed me : comparative

poverty has also shielded me from the influence of those who otherwise might have placed me under the guardianship of the Lord Chancellor, and thus have deprived me of the liberty I am now enjoying, and am most anxious that others who are oppressed as I have been, should also enjoy.

Whoever, I presume, is in possession of liberty, with the power of exercising their reason and speech, should omit no opportunity of bringing to light, through those faculties, and by the use of their pen, and the aid of the press, these disgraceful proceedings, which are committed under the sanction of those who, to this day, uphold the cruel system pursued in St. Luke's Hospital. However modified the treatment towards the patients in that institution may be, since I was an inmate under its roof, there cannot be that improvement which there ought to be, while the same physician still holds his situation;* and the same kind of ignorant attendants, similar to the one who was authorised to exercise her tyranny over me, are selected and retained ;—an ignorant woman, who could nei-

* This appeal was published in the *Lancet*, of November 28th, 1840 ; since that time the physician has resigned in favour of his son, whose qualifications, every reflecting mind must admit, should be tested before he be allowed to enter upon so important a situation, and not because his father filled the office, he should necessarily step into it.

ther read nor write, had the sole management of twenty or thirty of the patients, many of them possessing cultivated minds that only required direction. Surely such a fact need only be known, to meet with the reprobation it deserves.

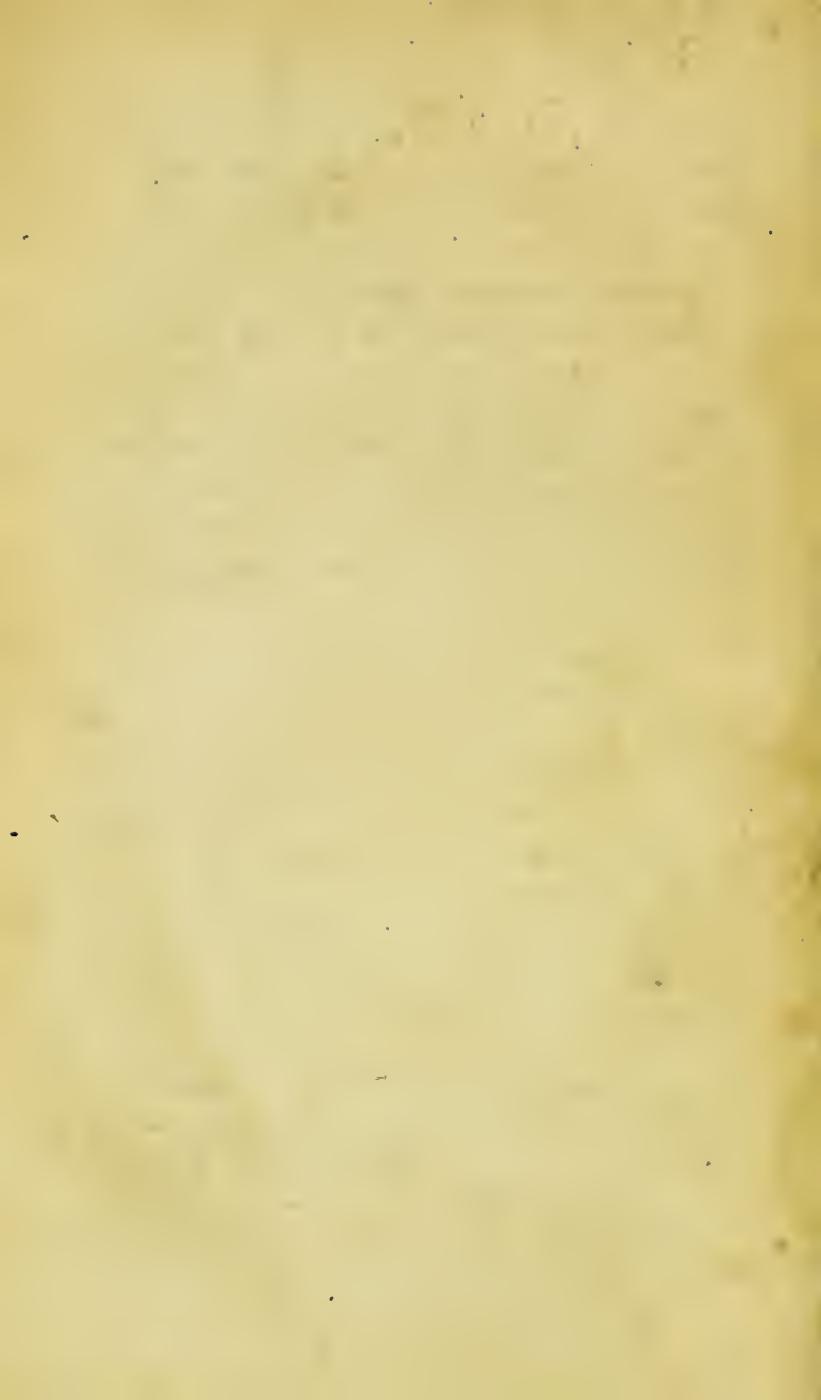
The genial character of christianity which this country professes to maintain is liberty, but how many thousands are writhing under more than Egyptian bondage, owing to the trammels with which the mind is shackled. If one of that sex, whose nature it is to look to man for protection, has felt as she has the humiliating effects of oppression, what must man himself feel, under the same kind of despotism?

I respectfully solicit, in behalf of those who are still compelled to submit to degradation and insult, without any apparent hope of redress, that consideration which their case demands, in order that immediate and effectual means may be adopted to reinstate them in those privileges, to which, as members of the human family, they are justly entitled.

That the evils of the present system may be speedily exposed and reformed is, and will remain, my fervent desire!

SARAH NEWELL.

*Upper Grafton Street,
Fitzroy Square.*



Accession no. 32498

Newell, Sarah

Author

Facts connected
with the treatment

Call no.

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